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Opening Statement of Congressman John Lewis (D-GA)
Hearing on the Department of the Treasury's
Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau
May 20, 2008

Today, the Subcommittee on Oversight will review the operations of the Department of the Treasury's Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau ("TTB"). It is the newest agency in the Department of Treasury; yet, it collects the oldest of our Federal taxes—the excise taxes on alcohol and tobacco.

This Subcommittee has not had a full review of TTB in over fifteen years. This hearing is long overdue. TTB plays an important role in our government. This agency collects \$15 billion in excise taxes each year, regulates the alcohol and tobacco markets, and protects the public.

It has been 75 years since the repeal of the Prohibition, and the demands on TTB are growing. However, its budget has not. It has less than 600 employees and no law enforcement agents to oversee markets of almost \$600 billion. This does not count products sold outside the tax system. Illegal products threaten our health, our safety, and our revenue. I am concerned that TTB is not getting the respect it deserves given its broad and important mission. The Subcommittee welcomes Mr. Manfreda and looks forward to his testimony.

Thank you.